

DECEMBER 2, 1976

The most dignified way out now is to surrender by a white flag until non-conditional terms can be drawn up. I supported President Ford. My smart headed brother, the college professor, chose Mr. Carter. Half of the whole state of Georgia won't hold the new jobs that'll come open in the '77. Here I am at the ranch with nothing but holdover calves and frost burned grass to help me through a long winter.

It didn't have to turn out that way. As soon as C.B.S. declared the winner, I started trying to call my brother to switch allegiance.

In the hubbub of the election returns, no one would have noticed a new name inserted under the "N's" on the Carter roles. Excellent ink erasers are available at all office supply stores. It would have been no problem for a college professor to blot off, say, a fellow named "Noble" or "Nolek" from a list of supporters. People misspell our name all the time.

Another raw deal I got was hearing too late that President Ford had lost his voice. You don't have to be told how important that was in the outcome. A politician without full use of his vocal chords is as hamstrung as a bricklayer under blindfold.

Nick the Greek and the other big shot gamblers were giving Carter an 8 to 5. I'll bet everyone from here to El Paso a cup of coffee that Greek fellow didn't know Mr. Ford had a weak voice, or he'd have been on the other end of the odds.

Gamblers over in England were also supporting Mr. Ford. I should have caught that tip. The English don't know anything about our political system. They proved that 200 years ago by allowing King George to lose 13 out of 13 colonies. I blame myself for that blunder. Next time I so much as hear that the English are using margarine on their afternoon crumpets, I'm going to fly to Wisconsin to buy a creamery.

I was cured of politics without supporting a loser. In the course of the debates, news scribes made big lines of the mistakes by the candidates. I listened for the word "Cattle," Had one of those fellows so much as promised to eat a steak, he'd have carried the Shortgrass Country by a margin that'd make Mr. Johnson's '64 landslide look like he'd fallen off the stump in Rhode Island the first day of the primary.

Forecasters also kept saying the Midwest was undecided because of Mr. Butz's indiscretion. Folks I talked to up there certainly weren't undecided how they felt about buying five-weight Angus steers. Seems like they were plenty definite about their future in regards to cattle. Mr. Butz's language wasn't near as much an issue as the freight bill on a calf. The people I contacted were interested in money, not the Secretary of Agriculture's retirement. Some of them may have even forgotten to vote, unless there was a state referendum outlawing cattle feeding.

Next election year, I'm going to split my ticket so many ways that a full time Belden Poll employee won't be able to count the different bandwagons. I never did reach my brother. At least, the election returns aren't going to lose as much as the cattle will.